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AUTHOR Levinsohn, Florence Hamlish
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ABSTRACT

In response to another paper that suggests scholarly publication may soon take nonprint forms, this discussion asserts that, because of the intimacy between the reader and the printed word, the traditional forms of expression in scholarly work will not be greatly altered. Although scholarly journals in education are largely responsible for presenting research and innovative ideas, it is noted that they are little read by practitioners in the subject fields they cover. (Author/KS)

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In Defense of the Status Quo

Florence Hamlish Levinsohn

School Review

University of Chicago

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A few weeks ago, a problem arose that threatened to prevent my coming to the meetings. I called Jim and Stan to tell them and they said that they hoped that I would solve the problem. And then they said that I would probably work harder to solve the problem after I had read their paper because they thought it offered a challenge that any red blooded editor couldnt refuse to take up. They were right, of course. As I read their paper, my hackles rose, smoke fumed from my nostrils, and I prepared to do battle. Are you crazy? Its my job youre talking about. My job as managing editor of a privately owned, scholar controlled journal that is subsidized by the University of Chicago in years that it doesnt pay its own way, that has no interest in page costs because that is antithetical to the scholarly enterprise, and whose only function is to bring to those in the field of education the best ideas. We know that we also function as a vital cog in the marketplace but we try always to avoid having that function influence us in any way. I am a part of a long tradition of the printed word. I am utterly incompetent to discuss all this sophisticated hardware. I can read and write on paper. Paper is my business, along with print, and 3rd class mail. I am a basically very conservative person, born with a pencil in my hand and pledged never to relinquish it for any complicated system of communication that separates me from my readers and writers. Of course, not everybody in my business is so conservative. Stan and Jim are right that some people are seriously looking for alternatives to the basically very costly system of print publication. They are experimenting with, for instance, micro fiche. And to date they are falling on their faces. Because the professoriate is also a basically very conservative bunch attached to the intimacy of print, just as they are attached to tenure.

Quite seriously, I do not believe that advanced technology will change the system of journal publication or book publication very much. At School Review, we use computer type because it is a lot cheaper. And I think that in the end the wonderful old typesetting machine will disappear because the computer will learn to do all the things that beautiful old machines can do. It cant yet. Journals and books that have lots of mathematics and tabular materials still must be set in type by the old method. But its just a matter of time, Im sure. And there will be other innovations that will cut costs. Binding will be done more cheaply by better machinery that we have now, although we have recently at the University of Chicago Press, purchased a bindery machine that cost many thousands of dollars and that does the job much faster and cheaper. But it will be replaced by an even more complicated machine. We will probably move to some new plastic paper that is cheaper because rag paper has become so dear. Other means will be found to cut costs so that journals can continue to publish in the same format because those of us who control the journals are deeply committed to the intimate relationship between the publication of scholarly work and the reader of it. We are deeply committed to the intimacy of print and will fight to the end for its survival. We may, of course be replaced by another generation that is not born with pencils in their hands for of course the generations that are coming up after us are being born into a different technological age. Their commitment to the tradition may not be as strong. But the fact is that each generation is inducted by the last and, at least where I work, where more journals are published than anywhere else, we are inducting our young people into our tradition. They are, its true, experimenting with alterna-

tives but the heart of their business is paper and print, more journals not less. Every year the University of Chicago Press takes on more journals to publish.

But of course Im not addressing myself to the real questions Stan and Jim raised. I have so far evaded the question of the proliferation of journals that is making it so difficult to keep up with them, that is making it possible for so much trash to be published, that is making in fact a travesty of what is for me a sacred tradition, that is the publication of scholarship. But the problem lies not in the journal business but in the academic business, in the sole reliance on publication for judging the merit of an academics worth. As long as that system prevails, and it threatens to expand rather than change, then the journal business will expand to meet the need. And ~~finally~~ eventually very few people will read very few journals because the mass will become overwhelming. And journals will function merely as outlets for people to publish whatever they can dream up in the way of so called scholarship so that departments can count journal articles to find out who they should hire and promote and give tenure to.

Still, those of us who are committed to the publication of scholarship will labor to find the new insights, the new contributions that will forward knowledge. We will cut costs where we can, charge a lot for subscriptions, and struggle to find readers. We will resist like crazy any attempt to change our basic format, because we believe it is god given, though in fact it is not much more than 100 years old. But it is the product of the scientific revolution and as long as we live in a scientific age, we will hold fast to what we believe is the heart of that age, the intimate relationship between scientists

and their printed word. But of course I may be a voice crying in the wilderness. All this may be purely romantic talk. But I dont think so. I think that the people who make the breakthroughs in science are basically conservative in all the parts of their lives outside their research and that they will cling to the journal as a loved tradition. And those who make the journals will cling to them because among the conservatives in the world those in publishing are the most conservative. We want to publish outlandish ideas but we want to retain our forms.

But Id like to come at this question now from another point of view and ask why it is that so few people in the education business read the journals that we so lovingly publish. Let me give you some awful figures. There are more than 3 million people involved in the business of education. Of those the largest number are, of course, teachers. And they read the NEA journal or the stuff that comes out of AFT plus some specific journals addressed to helping them do their job from day to day, the Science Teacher and such journals. 250,000 of them also read Learning, a slick magazine filled with ads and cartoons and little how to pieces. The next largest group is the administrators and they read their special journals, coming out of their associations. A few of them also read School Review and the other scholarly journals. The next largest group are the teacher trainers. A couple weeks ago, I went to the annual meeting of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education and asked someone where the book exhibits were and he explained that there were no book exhibits, that these people dont buy books. They dont buy journals either, I submit, from the figures. The three major general scholarly journals, Harvard Educational Review, Teachers

College Record and School Review have a combined readership of 22 thousand readers, but the chances are that there is considerable overlap with many people reading all three while many more never look at these journals. The AERA journals, and those published by the various specialty organizations such as the history of education, comparative education, and so on, have captive audiences in that a mambership brings with it a subscription, but most of these journals have very few subscribers outside their memberships. Do any of you here read the Comparative Education Review or the History of Education Review or the Journal of Negro Education? It seems that people engaged in the business of education, whether it is in the delivery or research in education do not read the reports of current research, historical essays, or the theoretical work that is published in the major scholarly organs. What is read instead are the popularizations and condensations that are found in the Kappan, the NEA journal and others of this type. The association of teachers colleges decided at that meeting that I attended this month that they would alter their association journal to a slicker format to compete I suppose with the Kappan. It has never been of a very high scholarly quality but the attempt in the past has been to present original research and ideas rather than the glosses of original research and theory that is done so well by the Kappan. Of course there is a small body of folk that are interested in reading and writing original research and theory. But it disturbs me greatly that more people in this business are not reading the scholarly journals for that is where the ideas are spelled out in the kind of detail that can make for changes in education. It is outrageous to me that the business of education operates in such a mindless way. For years and years, since public schooling

became the full-fledged institution that it is today, the people who influence what will be done and the people who do it have swung like monkeys in the trees from one set of propositions to another about how children should be taught. Serious intellectual discourse about these propositions is carried out in the scholarly journals and watered down versions of these ideas are conveyed to the practitioners. The idea of seriously discussing what the propositions mean and what their implications are is only for the small body of scholars; there is no effort made at the teachers college level, apparently, to teach potential practitioners to enter that discourse. It would be bad enough if it were only the teachers and administrators in the schools who were not engaged in the discourse, but it is also the researchers, those who mindlessly test propositions that they havent bothered to analyse. Thus we see endless reports of empirical research in the AERA journals with very little serious effort to examine the validity of the constructs. Thus we see the endless use of test scores to get answers to questions without any effort to determine just what it is that test scores tell us. It is only in the scholarly journals and books that these kinds of questions are explored and they are the materials that are read by a mere handful of those engaged in the business of education. But educational theory is too important to be left to the scholars. They are for the most part remote from the delivery of it though they do see the process when they do their research but they have no direct stake in it. No salaries, no amount of prestige for scholars rests on the delivery of education. It is as if there were two distinct worlds--that of scholarship in education and that of delivery. I must correct myself. It is not as if, there are indeed two worlds, miles apart. And it is those miles

that we in the publishing business want to bridge. We want to bring in contact with those who are thinking about that delivery those involved in a variety of ways with the delivery in ways that could be very influential if they were sufficiently understood. Many of those on the delivery side dismiss the scholars as ivory tower intellectuals, which indeed they appear to be. But the fact is that those in the delivery system are so close to it that they do not have the ability to think clearly about what they are doing and about what needs to be done. It has been well documented that teachers and others in the delivery system have an action orientation. It is the so called ivory tower intellectuals who are not involved who can see objectively what the problems are and who can invent solutions to the problems. But the solutions cannot be adequately tested if they are not adequately understood. If the practitioners are not reading the work of the scholars but are instead reading only glosses of their work, they cannot do what is required to gain significant change, namely test the propositions in the ways that fulfill all the requirements. Watered down propositions result in watered down tests. I must admit to you that I sometimes want to weep when I realize that only other scholars will read a particular article I am publishing when it should be read by those who are teaching teachers or those who are doing educational research or those who are working in the schools. When I receive a letter from a school administrator who has read and agreed or disagreed with a given article I am overjoyed because at least one such person has read the journal. But the fact seems to be that not many such people read the scholarly journals and that the business of educational publishing is very much fragmented and probably destined to become even more so. This fragmentation reflects the polarization of the society in general. Certainly the education

business is as good a reflection of American society as one can get. And as it shrinks because the birth rate drops, if indeed it continues to do, it will become more fragmented because the markets will become increasingly more competitive. Which returns me, finally, to the question of survival. It is clear now, Im sure, that I have no question about whether journals should and can survive. They will survive, albeit with many problems. The ones I am most concerned with are,of course, the journals in education and I often have questions about their survival as the education business shrinks. But education is the voice of the democratic society and as long that perseveres, the voices of intellectual ferment and change will continue to make themselves heard, and it will mainly be in the journals that they will be heard. For journals represent the record of thought in any given discipline and even when they seem to be voices crying in the wilderness, they are that vital social record that society needs to advance itself in the slow, elephantine way that societies move.

Perhaps I have evaded completely the questions posed by Stan and Jim. Perhaps I have sounded like a Luddite, threatening to break the machines when they begin to encroach on my territory. Perhaps I have sounded as if I am living in my own little world, putting out a scholarly journal that most of the people in the business of education dont read and not caring because I believe that what I do is such a precious charge, and that I am oblivious to the problems of those of you who need to find more outlets and more modern forms in which to disseminate your work. Well, if thats the way I sound, so be it, for that is the way I feel. Publishing the printed words on paper in a form that people can hold in their hand and write on and tear out to file away has been my life work and I

aint about to be undone by a cold mechanized technology that removes print from those I want to communicate with. I am not at all indifferent to the problems of those who need outlets for their work but it is their responsibility to change the system that has resulted in their needing those outlets so desperately rather than my responsibility. On the other hand, I dont object to more and more journals. The more the better. Everyone should have an opportunity to make his or her small contribution to the shaping of the world. And it is the scholarly journals that are largely responsible for the eventual shaping of the world. It is where all the most important ideas have appeared in the last hundred years of great change and innovation. And will continue to be. And panels like this one, where editors and writers are communicating with each other can only have a good effect. For we are all in this together and need to talk with one another. We should all be talking all the time. I hope you will all ask lots of questions at the end of these presentations, for I know that the other editors feel as I do that we want to hear from you, that hearing from you can only benefit us just as we hope that hearing from us benefits you.